



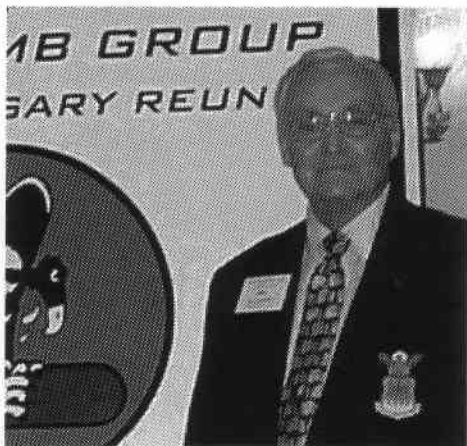
CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Spring, 2006 Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
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President's Message

William Gemmill, Lt. Col (ret.)



Eldred Specht

Carl Barr recently advised me of the passing of Eldred Specht (743) on 17 March, 2006. Eldred was the ball turret gunner on Tim Swearingen's crew, and Carl was the navigator.

Eldred was a guy, along with Bob Armstrong, who was still able to wear his WWII olive drab Class A uniform. That alone made me stand in awe of Eldred, let alone his living to tell about his experiences in that awful ball turret. Eldred's widow, Elizabeth, was very thoughtful to pass this sad word to Carl for all of us to share.

Bill Gemmill

Marian L. "Ann" Davis

Ann Davis, 86, passed away March 26, 2006. Born in Des Moines, Iowa, Ann attended Iowa State, and graduated Phi Beta Kappa and with highest distinction from the University of Iowa.

In 1942, she married Col. John F. Davis (741), then followed him around the country when he was in the military and at Harvard Law School. Son Craig was born in 1946 and daughter Karen in 1949.

The family lived in Des Moines, where John still lives. Craig, his wife Katy, and their sons, Ian and Connor, live in Texas. Karen and husband John Langbein live in California.

Ann and John enjoyed traveling, Friendship Force, Terps Dance Club, Family Forum, golf, skiing, their Clear Lake cottage, and friends.

Ann will especially be remembered for her intelligence, graciousness, energy, and enthusiasm.

Bill Gemmill

To 455thBG Assoc. members:

I would like to ask all of you to inform us of the deaths of any of our comrade-in-arms from the 455th.

We are growing to be a closer-knit family as the years go by, and each member becomes dearer to us.

You can reach us by e-mail at jgriggstx@austin.rr.com (Exec. Dir. Greg Riggs), aphp@comcast.net (C.C. Editor Craig Ward), and wgemmill@tampabay.rr.com (Bill).

Best Regards,
Bill Gemmill, President
455th BG Association

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Can You Help?

Ref: Anderton Article, Fall 2005 Cerignola Connection

Dear Editor,

My dad was real excited about the article last fall in the *Cerignola Connection*. He even had someone from Salt Lake City (about 45 minutes from Morgan) give him a call and they are planning on getting together to "reminisce".

I appreciate the newsletter. It means a lot to these brave veterans.

I have a few questions. The picture of my dad and his crew (in front of the *Liberty Bell*) is from their training session. I was unaware that any other picture was in existence of his crew together.

I recently ran across a very interesting picture (see bottom of article). It appeared to be taken overseas.

I confirmed this after searching on the web for the *Teepee Time Gal*. Past issues of the *Cerignola Connection* talk about this airplane. This at least confirmed the picture being taken in Italy.

To my knowledge this may be the only picture of my dad in Europe. He remembers that no one on his crew had a camera.

He has always maintained that at this point in the war, they did not have assigned aircraft. My belief is they may have flown in this aircraft on at least one mission "or" the plane was popular for crew pictures. Anyway, one of

my questions is if you know of any record that exists which would give a log of specific aircraft and the mission history of the aircraft and possibly the crew assigned to specific missions? In my dad's records, it just states time logged and where they went. There is an identifier such as B-24J, H..., but no serial number. Do you have any pictures of the *Teepee Time Gal*? It would be a wonderful thing if I could peg down the fact that they might have flown this aircraft.

I am especially interested if you have any group records or pictures which may be of interest or know where this material may reside.

Thanks for your help.

Regards,
Rodney Anderton

Picture of D. J. Anderton (back row, left) and his crew in front of *Teepee Time Gal*



Can You Help?

I have been a B-24 historian since 1979. I am researching a series on the 15th Air Force consisting of four volumes ... one for each of the four Bomb Wings using the B24.

Our next volume is the 304th Bomb Wing. I am interested to see if your

readership could help me in obtaining the following:

- 1) Photos of Nose Art, and;
- 2) Mission Flimsys, which contain the mission date, the target, the pilot names, and the last three digits of the aircraft serial numbers.

I have received a great deal of assistance from David Bellemere, Hank Groen, Mark Mason, and Victor Murray. Please thank these gentlemen for the help.

If any of your readership are able to help, I would appreciate it. I will copy and return any material, and will reimburse any expenses.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Best Regards,
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B-24 Historian and Archivist
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Nina Von Stauffenberg

Widow of Nazi Army officer who tried to kill Hitler in 1944

On Sunday, April 2, 2006, Nina Von Stauffenberg passed away in Bavaria at age 92. She was the widow of the aristocratic Nazi Army officer who tried to kill Hitler with a briefcase bomb. The plot failed.

Col. Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg and other collaborators were shot, and their families were arrested by the Gestapo. The family members were released from custody at the end of the war.

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Dear Editor,

This letter is regarding the short article on the Fairchild PT - 19A in the Spring 2005 Cerignola Connection. My father, S/Sgt. Raymond Windsand (740), owned two of them and said they were great planes.

He bought one near Lansing, Michigan. And for the second one, he flew to Norfolk, Nebraska (birthplace of Johnny Carson), to purchase.

The first one had shark teeth painted on the nose. He's looking for a picture. He thinks this was in the early 50's, it was before the Mackinaw Bridge across the straits was built. (connecting the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan).

He flew this one back, needing to add oil because of an oil leak. He owned this plane for about a year and a half.

To acquire the second one, he flew his J3 CUB to Norfolk for a trade. It was a cold trip in November. It was deer season here, and the mine he worked is closed down for the hunting season.

He's not a hunter, so when his friend showed him the ad in the "yellow pages" (I think this is what the flying paper was called), he lined it up.

There was no heat in the CUB. This plane had a cruise propeller, not a take-off prop. He could cruise at 110 mph. He went into a lot of detail, but this is the gist of it.

He was a private pilot for 49 years. He sold his aircraft after he was diagnosed with diabetes. He owned this Taylor

Craft for 29 years.

Dad joined the U. S. Army Air Corps March 3, 1942. In August, he attended Army Gunnery School in Las Vegas, Nevada. On December 16, 1943, he left the states to join the new 15th AF in Cerignola, Italy, arriving Feb 1, 1944.

He flew 50 missions as a right waist gunner. Most of the missions were flown in the Skywolf (Col. Ed Riggs' aircraft).

I finally started to listen to his stories. We went out to eat at an Italian restaurant. There was a map of Italy in the lobby. That's when I realized how important it was to learn this. I have a lot of his papers. I have a copy from the diary of Col. Riggs. It describes every mission, targets, injuries, etc. Stunning!

My Dad is 86 years old, and in great shape. He remembers the war like it was yesterday.

Thanks,
Mary Windsand

Can You Help?

My father, S/Sgt Joseph H. Force (Service # 33701029) served with the 455th BG, 743rd Bomb Squadron, in 1944. He was a ball gunner and flew 35 missions.

I'm trying to locate anyone who flew with my father or find his name on a Squadron roster.

Respectfully,
S/Sgt. Robert Force

Editor's Note: Please forward any information you have to your editor, and I'll make sure Mr. Force receives it.

Final Flights

S/Sgt. William F. Flynn (742) of Florham Park, NJ passed away Feb. 6, 2006 at age 87. His aircraft was the "Miss I Hope". He was stationed at San Giovanni from November 1944 through September, 1945, flying a total of 25 missions and receiving the Air Medal. After the war, Sgt. Flynn was an FBI agent for 30 years, and Security Director for a New Jersey bank before retiring in 1980. He is survived by his wife, June, two sons, four daughters, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

S/Sgt. Donald Kaplanek (740) of Tomahawk, WI., took his final flight June 30, 2005 at age 83. Sgt. Kaplanek was shot down on his 48th mission (the 100th mission of the 455th BG) over Bleckhammer, Germany. The crew bailed out over Hungary, where they were taken prisoner for the remainder of the war. Sgt. Kaplanek flew in the Bob Millar crew with S/Sgt. Gerald Adams. *See crew photo below.*



Front row, l to r: Donald Kaplanek, waist gunner; Julian Counts, engineer; Richard Keen, radio operator; William Grooms, waist gunner; David Goble, tail turret gunner; Gerald Adams, ball turret gunner. Back row, l to r: Abram Pendleton, pilot; Robert Millar, co-pilot; John Pramak, navigator; Israel Katz, bombardier.

Eldred Specht (743) made his Final Flight on March 17, 2006. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth Specht, of Mariposa,

California. Eldred was the ball turret gunner from Tim Swearingen's crew. All his life, he was able to wear his WWII - era Olive Drab Class A uniform, along with Bob Armstrong. Carl Barr was Navigator on his crew.

1st Lt. Howard Shaffer (741) took his final flight on October 28, 2005. He is survived by his wife Anne Shaffer.

Editor's Note: Please see the accompanying article (page 23) about a June 20, 1944 incident in which Lt. Shaffer's crew bailed out over the Grand Canyon in Arizona after an engine failure.

Elberon Grayson Andrews took his final flight on March 20, 2006 at age 81.

He lived in Colorado Springs. He was a member of the 455th when they were training, and broke an eardrum as they were getting ready to go overseas. He was hospitalized in New Hampshire, and delayed the crew.

A guard was put on him in the hospital, as the Army knew he would get out and go with the crew, if possible.

Sgt. Milton Kaplan (743) of Scottsdale, AZ. took his final flight on Feb. 25, 2006. He is survived by his lovely wife Doris. Milton submitted several items for publication in the newsletter in years past.

Final Flights for which Editor has limited information

1st Lt. Karl Anderson (742) made a final flight June 1, 2005.

T/Sgt. Donald Bauer (741) took his final flight in 2005.

Lt. Col. Robert Boldt (742) made a final flight May 5, 2005.

Capt. Andrew Graham (742) took his final flight in 2005.

1st Lt. Robert Greenquist (743) took his final flight on March 1, 2005.

M/Sgt. Hubert "Hub" Vreatt (743) took his final flight on May 5, 2005.

God Bless these brave
veterans and their families

Can You Help?

I am a Czech aviation historian. I learned that on Oct. 14, 1944, in Czech territory, one American airman bailed out and was found dead.

According to local archives, he was named Edward W. RUYTER (born 1922), 455th BG/741 BS, personnel number O-776804.

He was buried in local cemetery and in 1946 exhumed. Unfortunately, I can't find his name in the roster of the 455th BG history book. On that day, Oct. 14, 1944, there was the Blechhammer Refinery mission.

Please, could you tell me if you have any information about this case? Thank you very much for your answer.

Regards,
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455th BOMB GROUP
ASSOCIATION GENERAL
MEMBERSHIP MEETING

October 22, 2005
Kansas City, Missouri

The General Membership of the 455th Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc. met in the "Century A" room of the Westin Crown Center Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri, on Saturday, October 22, 2005. Association President Bill Gemmill presided, assisted by Executive Director Gregory Riggs.

The meeting was called to order at 0905 hours by Bill Gemmill. The minutes of the October 11, 2003 General Membership meeting were read and accepted as written.

Greg Riggs briefly explained to the membership Gus Wendt's medical issues, and why he had assumed, by vote of the Board of Directors, Gus' responsibilities on May 30, 2005.

He then briefed the members on the present association membership and financial condition. There are presently 626 individuals on the association mailing list of which 377 are life members and 116 are widows of former members. The association had just over \$16,600 coming into the reunion, but much of the reunion expenses have not yet been paid.

Greg Riggs presented the majority recommendation of the Board of Directors that the Association hold annual reunions beginning in 2006.

Associated with this proposal was a proposal to attempt to combine reunion efforts with other 15th Air Force B-24 associations for future reunions.

After much discussion of the pros and cons of these issues, the membership approved two decisions. The first was to begin annual reunions but to defer that change until 2007. The second was to attempt to join forces with other 15th Air Force bomber associations.

Greg Riggs said he would begin with 304th Bomb Wing B-24 associations, then expand as necessary to other 15th Air Force B-24 associations, then expand as necessary to 15th Air Force B-17 associations. The proposed arrangement would be similar to this year's effort with the 454th Bomb Group Association; i.e.: separate reunions held at the same time and location. No decision was made concerning the location of the next reunion because of the flexibility required in coordinating with other associations. General guidelines would be a central-U.S. location, and avoiding extreme cold and high altitudes.

Greg Riggs informed the members that the Board of Directors had amended the by-laws concerning the composition of the Board. The requirement to have ten directors, in addition to the officers, was amended to have six-to-ten directors. He then presented the nominating committee's proposed slate of officers for the next two years.

The proposed officers were elected. Greg Riggs then presented the nominating committee's proposed slate of five directors, who were also elected. An additional five directors were nominated from the floor and they were also elected.

The results for the coming two years are:

William (Bill) Gemmill,
President
Francis (Frank) Lashinsky,
Past President
Roderick (Rod) Clarke,
Vice President
James (Jim) Smith,
Secretary
Gregory (Greg) Riggs,
Executive Director/Treasurer
Carl Loiocano,
Continuing Director
James Gould, III,
Continuing Director
John Davis,
Continuing Director
Craig Ward,
Continuing Director
Elmo Henske,
Incoming Director
Ted Tronoff,
Incoming Director
Ormond Buffington,
Incoming Director
Carl Barr,
Incoming Director
Bill Crawford,
Incoming Director
George Underwood,
Incoming Director.

Gene Hudson asked if anything had been considered to honor Gus Wendt for his eight years of service as Executive Director/Treasurer.

The membership was informed that the Board of

Directors had voted to send Gus a \$1,400 honorarium as was done for Lou Hansen following his ten-years of service. Greg Riggs will write a letter of appreciation to accompany the honorarium immediately following the reunion.

John Davis expressed his appreciation for the work of the two second-generation members of the Board of Directors, Greg Riggs and Craig Ward. Bill Gemmill also introduced Mark Mason, the third second-generation full member of the association.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1005 hours.

The hardest years in life are those between ten and seventy.
-Helen Hayes (at age 73)-

455th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

October 22, 2005
Kansas City, Missouri

The Board of Directors met in the Congressional Room of the Westin Crown Center Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri, on Saturday, October 22, 2005. The meeting was open to both outgoing and incoming board members. Members present were:

William (Bill) Gemmill,
President
Francis (Frank) Lashinsky,
Past President

Roderick (Rod) Clarke,
Vice President
James (Jim) Smith,
Secretary
Gregory (Greg) Riggs,
Executive Director/Treasurer
Carl Loiocano,
Continuing Director
James Gould, III,
Continuing Director
John Davis,
Continuing Director
Craig Ward,
Continuing Director
Elmo Henske,
Incoming Director
Ted Tronoff,
Incoming Director
Ormond Buffington,
Incoming Director
Carl Barr,
Incoming Director
Bill Crawford,
Incoming Director
George Underwood,
Incoming Director

The meeting was called to order at 1030 hours by Bill Gemmill. The minutes of the October 20, 2005 Board of Directors meeting were read and accepted as written.

Greg Riggs' proposed for future consideration that if excess funds remain if or when the Association eventually disbands, the funds be donated to organizations which help the military. This was viewed as an appropriate way to promote the memory of the men of the 455th Bomb Group. In the following discussion, organizations suggested as examples were USO, Red Cross, Cadence International, Air Force Aid Society, and the USAF Academy

Association of Graduates.

Rod Clarke also suggested putting a 455th Bomb Group plaque in the new Air Force Memorial. There was no attempt to reach a decision. The discussion was simply for future general direction.

Some discussion was devoted to possible ways to raise funds in the future if that should become necessary. Very little income is now generated, since most members are life members. The largest recurring operating expense is approximately \$1000 for each edition of the newsletter. It was recommended that something be included in a future edition of Cerignola Connection letting members know that contributions to the association are tax deductible. John Davis will provide appropriate wording to Greg Riggs for inclusion in some unspecified future edition of the newsletter.

Each member of the board was given an opportunity to share any thoughts with the other members and to gain a better understanding of the role of director.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1005 hours.

In-Flight Emergency

Flying the airplane is more important than radioing your plight to a person on the ground incapable of understanding or doing anything about it.

Editor's Note:

I found the news clipping below in some military memorabilia that my father, Lt. John T. Ward (740), collected during his time in the Army.

Courtesy: Ft. Worth Star Telegram

Friday, April 27, 1945.

What FWAAF Combat Men Did:

In 50 Missions Sgt. Stewart's B-24 Never Dropped a Bomb!

Completing 50 solo missions as B-24 radio-gunner on runs that required no bombing but where they hit the target at 500 feet is the enviable record of S/Sgt. George R. Stewart, who for a long time could say nothing about his work. Today he's free to say a little.

The job of their group, operating in the Mediterranean theater, was to drop supplies to helpful underground movements. Their mission, for example, brought help to the Partisans in Yugoslavia and the Free French.

Operating alone, as experience soon showed was the only way to do, they'd come to the pre-arranged rendezvous, drop their cargo at low level, and scam.

Having fighters along for protection doesn't answer all problems, S/Sgt. William D. Pollock, AM gunner on a B-24 in the ETO, discovered one fine day.

He has in mind the day they tackled some nameless spot in Germany and enemy fighters hit them on the way back. Five ME 109s tackled seven B-24s and knocked out five. His tail gunner managed to get a 109.

The bombers had had fighter escort but the fighters had dropped down to take on a swarm of 109s. When the fighters pulled away the five 109s sneaked in from somewhere.

"That's the one of my 33 I don't like to think of," Pollock

Considering his 52 missions as B-24 pilot in the Southwest Pacific as "just some more of the usual stuff," Lt. Robert J. Stevens says he went out and dropped his bombs when and where he was told.

In his year over there orders took him to Borneo, the Philippines and spots in between. There wasn't much excitement, he reports, and no member of his crew has a single scratch to show for the experience.

When he wasn't on the job, Lt. Stevens specialized in sleeping and playing poker. The latter hobby had quite a lot of ups and downs but all in all he figures he came out about even.

While Lt. John T. Ward can recall nothing of personal importance happening in his 34

runs over the target as B-24 co-pilot in the Italian theater, there is one incident that does stick in his mind.

It happened on returning from Graz, Austria, and a scattering of debris over his plane signalled the event. Above him the lead and No. 2 planes had collided and ripped each other. They were descending in a twisted mass, scattering wreckage on others in the formation.

Down with the bombers went two full crews of men, with most of whom Lt. Ward had trained in the States. Not one parachute was seen to open.



Can You Help?

I have been compiling some tables of aircraft and personnel for a complete data base of the 455th BG.

Part of my research is in past issues of the Cerignola Connection. I noticed you do not have a copy of Winter 1992 on your CD on the web files, yet it was referred to in the Spring 1993 edition (page 4).

Could you put out a distress call for the missing volume? Quite possibly someone has a copy and does not realize that it hasn't been scanned.

Thanks,
John Rohrer
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E-Mail Roster

Below is a list of e-mail addresses of 455th BG Assoc. members. If you want your e-mail address included in this roster, please email your Editor at aphp@comcast.net.

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Missing In Action

The 455th BG Assoc. has lost contact with the following people.

If you happen to know the current whereabouts of these folks, please inform Greg Riggs or Craig Ward.

John Berlinquet
Richard Bodwell, Jr.
Frank Burns
Mrs. Everett Crumpler
Mrs. Anne Dahlstrom
Mrs. Andrew Graham
Mrs. Evelyn Hawkins
Chester Hosac
Mrs. Betty Hutton
Mrs. William Knight
Leo Malisia, Sr.
Gilbert Moseley
Reid Peck
Mrs. Cynthia Smith
Mrs. Marilyn Smith
Mrs. Grover West, Jr.

WORLD WAR II: THROUGH THE EYES OF A B-24 CREW

**Researched and written by
Lisa Riggs, daughter of
455th BG Assoc. Executive
Director Gregory Riggs**

No one person's experiences can define World War II. It was a different war for those in the front lines than it was for those in support roles. It was a different war for those who were on the ground than for those who were in the air.

With America's involvement in World War II came a revolution in air power. To obtain and maintain air superiority, the United States commissioned a number of planes that could out-perform those of the Axis Powers.

One of these planes was the B-24 Liberator. The men who flew these planes over war-torn Europe in World War II spent less than two years together, but it was during the deadliest and most destructive war in the history of mankind. It still holds that distinction today.

Now, sixty years after the end of the war, these men still meet together. Every year or two, they travel from all parts of the nation to continue friendships started under the difficult circumstances of war.

It was, perhaps, those very circumstances that allowed these friendships to develop so thoroughly. When people have shared difficult times, and when they have helped one another survive those difficult times, the

roots of friendship grow rapidly and deeply.

This article illustrates some of the factors that produce such lasting friendships.

Not long before the U.S. entered the war, there were the usual battles within the War Department about which weapons to develop and buy. The B-17 Flying Fortress was the focus of debate for long-range heavy bombers. By the time the B-24 was developed, the battles in the War Department, Congress, and the court of public opinion had already been won.

Parties agreed that the United States needed these bombers, so the B-24 was never in the spotlight. The B-17 had already been associated in the public's mind with heavy bombardment, similar to the way people refer to Kleenex® every time they reach for a tissue regardless of what brand of tissue they really mean.

Although the B-24 matched the B-17 in survivability and outperformed it in range, altitude, airspeed, and bomb load, it never received equal public recognition.

While the B-17 overshadowed the B-24 throughout the war in the media coverage it received, more B-24s were built than any other aircraft in the history of the United States Army Air Corps or the United States Air Force, totaling 18,188.

Many of these planes belonged to the 455th Bomb Group of the Fifteenth Air Force stationed outside of Cerignola,

Italy.

The Allies first invaded Italy from the south in September of 1943. Once Allied Air Force bases were established in Italy, the Allies were capable of reaching anywhere in the Third Reich, Southern and Eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and the Balkans. Places not easily reached from England were within reach from Italy.

This fact made two factories, which produced sixty percent of German fighters, vulnerable to attack. The establishment of Italy-based groups also forced the German Luftwaffe to transfer half of their fighters to Southern Germany, relieving England of much opposition.

The Fifteenth Air Force was primarily in Italy to hit key targets that would destroy Germany's ability to make war: communications, power generators, marshalling yards, railroad, supply lines, key transportation hubs, shipping docks in Southern France, aircraft and ball bearing factories, and especially oil refineries.

These oil refineries were so greatly damaged, that by the end of the war, most traffic, including non-combat army vehicles, had resorted to horse-drawn carts because all the fuel was needed for the Third Reich.

Another advantage of beginning bombing operations from Italy was the weather. The American forces were able to get twice as many bombing days from Italy as from England

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in the winter due to adequate weather that enabled them to take off and form up for the missions. This allowed them to sustain the pressure on the Germans throughout the year rather than giving them a major break from heavy bombardment during the winter.

It was for these reasons the 455th Bomb Group was formed.

The 455th Bombardment Group of the Fifteenth Air Force was officially activated July 8, 1943. It soon consisted of four squadrons - the 740th, 741st, 742nd and the 743rd.

The first of the ground crews arrived in Cerignola 15 January 1944 to prepare for the arrival of the combat crews, who reached Italy on February 1, 1944.

When the first set of B-24s and their crews were sent overseas, they flew first to North Africa, where they remained until the new base was ready for them to arrive.

The typical B-24 crew consisted of four officers and six enlisted men. The officer positions were the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, and bombardier. Enlisted positions included the flight engineer, who also acted as top turret gunner, the ball turret gunner, the tail turret gunner, two waist gunners, and a radio operator. There was also a nose turret, but no one was specifically assigned to that position.

Different crews operated in unique ways. On some

crews, the radio operator occasionally took the position in the nose turret if he was not working the radio. In others, it was often the navigator because, unless he was in the lead plane, the navigator did not need to pay close attention to the location. He was more like an insurance policy to help the crew get home if the plane became separated from the formation due to battle damage.

In one plane in particular, the bombardier liked to man the gun of the nose turret.

Even the formation of crews differed from squadron to squadron. Each crewmember was initially trained for his position in the States before being placed on a crew. The crews of one squadron, for example, were formed when the members entered an auditorium theater. At the meeting for the crew formation, all of the pilots sat in the first seat of each row, followed by the co-pilots, navigators, and bombardiers. Next came the enlisted men, starting with the flight engineer, the radio operator, and finally the gunners.

Once everyone was seated, they introduced themselves to each other. Each row formed a crew, and then they proceeded to the next phase of training, in which they flew together.

The majority of the crews trained together before ever making the flight to Europe. Occasionally someone needed to be replaced during training. In the case of the crew of the "Multa Bona," one of the B-24s,

the navigator would continually get airsick. The plane would fly for four or five hours, but not until it started the descent would he begin to get sick. He said nothing about this throughout the course of training until the very end. When he finally told someone, he had to quit. The crew was then assigned a new navigator, but only a few test flights with the new member were completed before heading to Italy.

Once the new group was ready to join the war, the ground crews departed for North Africa in early December 1943 from Langley Field, Virginia. The four squadrons, each consisting of sixteen B-24s, were assembled at Langley in November. They began flying to Mitchell Field on Long Island on 2 December 1943, and the last of them arrived 15 December 1943.

While at Mitchell, the crews received equipment for their tours overseas and the planes went through their final checks. A few days before Christmas, the crews made the seven and a half hour flight to Morrison Field in Miami, Florida, for final equipment check and refueling. Early the next morning, the crews flew south for almost eleven hours to Waller Field, Trinidad.

Many crews spent Christmas in Trinidad, while others continued on to Belem, Brazil, then to Natal, Brazil.

Early on New Year's Eve, the crews left Brazil and began their twelve hour flight east to Dakar, Senegal, in West Africa. Next, they flew north seven and

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a half hours to Marrakesh, Morocco. Few crews remained more than one day in Marrakesh before flying over six and a half hours to Djedeida Field, near Tunis, Tunisia.

They arrived in Tunisia on January 5, 1944, where they remained until January 17, 1944 while the Army Corps of Engineers prepared the base at Cerignola, Italy.

Before leaving the States, crews usually named their planes. This helped to bond them together because everyone on a crew belonged to the same plane. It was common to name them after the wife or girlfriend of a crewmember, or in reference to her.

For example, Senator George McGovern's plane was the "*Dakota Queen*." His crew had named the plane after McGovern's wife, Eleanor, since he was the only married man on the crew.

However, girlfriends were not the only inspiration for naming planes. During the time they were in New York, several crews went to the Swingland nightclub on 54th Street every night. The club owner told one of the enlisted men that they were all a bunch of sky wolves because they were all airmen who chased after women.

Once they were in Florida, the enlisted men of one crew hired a man to paint a name on their plane. The next morning, the pilot, Lt. C. Edward Riggs, woke up ready to leave the country in his new plane and

found "*Sky Wolf*" painted on the side, with the head of a wolf below it. This sort of thing gave a crew a cohesive identity.

Most planes had a picture of "a real shapely lady on it," as was the case with the "*Multa Bona*." Sometimes a replacement needed to be made after leaving the States. The navigator of the "*Sky Wolf*" became inebriated the night before they were to make the trans-Atlantic trip to North Africa. He spent the entire flight passed out on the floor of the plane, forcing the pilot to make the flight without a navigator.

The pilot used his authority to have the navigator replaced as soon as they reached Tunisia. Fortunately, the Bomb Group Commander, Colonel Kenneth Cool, made the trans-Atlantic crossing in the "*Sky Wolf*" and witnessed the navigator's behavior, so he was entirely supportive of the pilot's decision.

It was good to finally settle down in Italy, but living arrangements were nothing to be envied. The six enlisted men of a crew lived with one another in an eight-man squad tent with dirt floors. Many dug shallow trenches around their tents to keep them from flooding when it rained. They definitely were "not in Kansas anymore," but the men tried to make life as normal as possible.

They had few comforts, so they had to improvise with what they had around them to build makeshift amenities.

For example, they converted steel drums into stoves to heat their tents. They

cut the drum in half and drilled a hole in the top. A steel pipe from the top of the drum through the top of the tent acted as a chimney. They had a drum of oil outside the tent to supply the stove that was often supplemented with high-octane aviation fuel. A small tube from the oil drum led to a drip panel that was beneath the stove drum. The men had to pay very close attention to the flow of oil going into the stove to ensure no oil spilled, causing a fire inside the tent. The stove had to be turned off if no one was in the tent or if they were all asleep, so they had to find other means of keeping warm at night.

The men filled their mattress covers with straw and wore everything they had to stay warm while they slept. They also covered themselves with blankets and often wore all of the layers of their flight suits.

During the winter, it was always muggy. The temperature did not drop below freezing, but it was always cold and wet. If supply did not have someone's size in galoshes, he went without. There was no local WalMart™ to fill the gaps.

The number of times men could take a shower proved few and far between. Early in a crew's tour, they thought very poorly of anyone who did not bathe regularly, but as the war went on, they grew accustomed to it. Men often went weeks between showers, especially in the winter months, because they had to go to an unheated tent with very little hot water, if any.

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The food at the mess hall was seldom appreciated by new crews, but to the men who had been there for a while, this was their staple. They ate stewed prunes and hash, powdered eggs, bread, Spam, and Vienna sausages. This became such a focus of daily life that airmen wrote a poem in honor of their daily meals entitled, Ode to Spam.

The men found enjoyment where they could, and a package from home provided a rare pleasure. When packages arrived, many men hoped for cheese. They would take slices of bread from the mess hall and make grilled cheese sandwiches at night in their tents on their homemade stoves - an escape from the Spam!

Sharing grilled cheese sandwiches was just one example of how crewmembers looked out for each other. They were always willing to help each other when it was necessary.

"We liked the Squadron doctor," Lt. Stan Iverson of the 740th recalled. "He gave us some medicine when we got back to the squadron - a shot of whiskey. Everyone got a shot of whiskey. Then we had buddies that never drank so we got his shot."

There were more serious displays of friendship, also. When Lt. Thomas Markham gave the order to bail out of his crippled aircraft, his navigator, Lt. Wesley Poore, realized that Sgt. Nelson's parachute was

damaged. He exchanged parachutes with the enlisted man then bailed out himself. He was able to manipulate the damaged parachute to a satisfactory landing, but he had clearly risked his life for someone who only a year earlier had been a complete stranger, but was now "family."

It was a stressful time. Different people coped in different ways with the war and with the unfamiliarity of being so far from what they knew and loved.

Many brought mementos from home. One man from Texas had his cowboy boots. "Every now and then he'd put his cowboy boots on and sway around."

Often a certain level of segregation between the officers and the enlisted men of the crew existed. They had different clubs and different mess halls. Still, there was also a strong degree of camaraderie because they had spent so much time training together before they went overseas.

Once in Europe and in the air, their very lives depended on one another. Officers and enlisted men were sometimes treated differently, but this was because of their different ranks. It did not produce animosity.

Most of the men were around twenty-years-old, so anyone older was considered almost ancient. Sgt. Ormond Buffington, a twenty-year-old flight engineer, recalled a man on his crew whom they called Uncle Tom. "He was called uncle because he was old. He

was twenty-six-years-old."

O c c a s i o n a l disagreements erupted, as can be expected when so many people, especially young people, live in such close proximity under stressful conditions. Rarely were there any real problems.

Among the enlisted personnel, the flight engineer was generally in charge. He held the highest rank of the enlisted men and often was the oldest. He also solved most of the problems.

The pilot had ultimate responsibility for leading the crew, and he was considered not only the boss but also the "father" of the crew "family."

On days that the crews were not flying, they could usually do anything they wanted to do. They could stay at the base and play games at the officer's club or the enlisted club, or they could leave the base. Everyone was responsible for checking the bulletin board to see which crews were scheduled to fly the following day. If a crew was not posted on the board by six o'clock in the evening, they would not be flying.

Such crews would often go to one of the near-by towns of Cerignola or San Giovanni on their days off. Wherever the American truck drivers were going, they were more than happy to take crewmen with them.

The flying crews did more than fly. For example, the officers were charged with censoring the letters of the

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enlisted men. They were to read the letters, and as long as the content did not compromise the integrity of the group, officers would sign and stamp them. Some officers read every letter they approved, but some officers never read a single letter that was not his own.

The crews lived on the ground, but their war was in the air. When it was time for a mission, the pilot was awakened first, usually around 0400 hours. He would then wake up the remaining three officers, and the bombardier would wake up the enlisted crewmen. The crew then attended a mission briefing with the other crews who were flying in the mission. This is where they learned where they were going, and the target.

When the plane was in the air, the crew did not need to use their oxygen masks until they reached 10,000 to 12,000 feet above sea level. Soon after, they began putting on the rest of their flight gear to stay warm.

Flying at 25,000 to 30,000 feet, the temperature in the plane would range between -22° F and -67° F. Once they reached altitude, each individual crew member was nearly indistinguishable, except for his position on the plane and possibly his size.

Even in warmer weather, they wore woolen pants and shirt, over which they put on a one-piece heated flying suit that had heated booties and gloves attached. On top of that, they wore fleece-lined overall pants,

then a jacket. Over the booties they wore sheepskin-lined leather boots.

The helmet had built-in earphones, requiring them to keep their helmets on at all times in order to hear what was transpiring. Their faces were covered with their oxygen masks and their goggles, so all skin was covered in order to protect them from the cold.

In addition, they wore parachutes, and when they reached a point over enemy territory where they needed to worry about antiaircraft fire, they put on their flak suits.

As much as these men were forced to grow up during the war, they were still young men with what might be considered big toys. As an example, below 12,000 feet there was very little air turbulence, so the plane did exactly what the pilot commanded. Commenting on flying in tight formation, Stan Iverson, a co-pilot of the 740th recalled: "So here would be the side gunners flying in close going, 'come on, chicken!' My gosh, we got pretty close but it was pretty safe because there was no turbulence. So they were challenging us to get closer and closer. We were a bunch of kids back then. It was dumb."

During the course of the war, a number of things changed for the crews. Early in the war, each crew had its own plane, but later they flew whatever planes were available.

Over time, the required number of missions per crew

varied. At times, the standard was fifty missions, at other times it was thirty-five, and still at other times it was twenty-five. Missions deemed exceptionally dangerous were initially counted for double credit, but when this rule was revoked, it was changed retroactively to the start of a crew's tour. This decreased the number of successful missions recorded for a number of crews.

In the early part of 1944, the greatest threat the bomber crews faced was that of the fighters. The enemy fighters picked up with the Allied bombers as soon as they reached German air space. The fighters flew right along with the bombers, attempting to shoot them down. They would stay in the air until they ran out of fuel and were forced to land, or until the bombers neared the target and the fighters would peel off to avoid the flak of antiaircraft fire.

Once the bombers were out of the flak zones, the fighters would then meet back up with them and fight against them until the fighters once again ran out of fuel.

On one memorable mission, the fighters never backed away. On 2 April, Palm Sunday of 1944, the mission was to attack a ball bearing plant in Steyr, Austria. On this rare occasion, the fighters revealed the importance of the target by never quitting; they stayed with the bombers even through the flak and antiaircraft fire over the target. That put the bombers under continuous fighter attack for 2.5 hours.

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The B-24s were often badly damaged due to the enemy fighters and the flak from antiaircraft fire, but many still managed to fly back to their base in spite of the damage. After a mission over Munich, Germany, on 9 June 1944, the "Sky Wolf" returned to Cerignola with over 100 holes in it, the majority of one of the two rudders shot off, and Ed Riggs, the pilot, had flak lodged through the heel of his boot that had made its way up through the bottom of the plane.

After September of 1944, however, mission logs showed very little sign of the Luftwaffe, as the Allied air power had destroyed almost all of the enemy aircraft, along with their reproduction capabilities. There were also fewer key targets, but this resulted in a higher concentration of antiaircraft units and their protective shield of flak around each target.

Crews did not all finish their tours at the same time. There were times when a crewmember completed one less mission than the others because he missed a mission due to illness or injury. At other times, a crewmember had more sorties to his credit because he filled in for another crew when one of its members had been ill or injured.

At times, a crew would lose a member and be given a replacement. This was hard on the crew because it usually meant a comrade was either badly injured and sent home, or

even killed, and now someone new was replacing him. The new member, however, could not fully take the person's place.

This situation was equally hard on the replacement because he joined a crew that did not really want him. The "Uninvited" lost one of their gunners in a mission over Moosbeirbaum, Austria. A replacement gunner was assigned to the crew. A member of the crew, Sgt. Walter Dragich, wrote regarding the replacement, "I don't remember the name of the replacement gunner, but I apologize for the cool reception he received from us. As I said before, we didn't want to get close to anyone."

For many crews, casualties were often never fully replaced. Instead of having a replacement assigned to the crew, men from other crews of that same position would simply fill in on the shorthanded crews. This partially explains why crews did not all complete their tours at the same time.

There was one thing about which most people did not speak. If a man stayed behind from a mission and the rest of his crew did not return, he was sent to live in a special tent. This was to get him away from the place to which his friends would not be returning, and also to free up the tent for newly arriving crews. Some felt a sense of guilt that they were not with their crew while others felt a sense of relief and gratitude that they were alive, but they always felt a sense of loss. The amount of time a man spent

there depended on his ability to cope with his loss. Sometimes, there would be two or three people in that tent all at one time.

The anxiety of rough missions and the grief of losing good friends took its toll on a number of men. Flight surgeons and doctors argued that some time off at rest and relaxation camps would do the men well. However, some chose not to go because they wanted to finish their tours of duty as quickly as possible. Early on, the Army would send the men to the Island of Capri for rest and relaxation, but once the Allied Forces moved north of Rome, the Army took over entire hotels and provided decent lodging for the airmen. Because Rome was not damaged by the war, it offered soldiers and airmen a place virtually untouched by the war that was tearing across Europe. Some crews spent Christmas of 1944 through New Year's of 1945 there. They called it "a little bit of Heaven".

Crews practiced very strict rules regarding behavior. There was to be no horseplay and no unnecessary communication over the intercom in case of emergencies. The importance of this was illustrated on one occasion when the bomb group attacked a target heavily defended by antiaircraft gun emplacements. Moments after releasing the bomb load, one bombardier said excitedly over the intercom, "Let's get the hell out of here." Hearing that amidst heavy flak, the two waist

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gunners mistook it for a bailout order and left the plane. The remainder of the crew returned safely to base. The two waist gunners, however, became prisoners of war for the remainder of the war.

With other crews and in other circumstances, however, strict intercom discipline was not always the case. Whenever they were out of enemy territory, there was often a certain amount of teasing and friendly banter over the intercom.

Enemy fighters and flak were not the only challenges on a mission. Because of the sub-zero temperatures when the plane reached altitude, even basic functions became difficult. For example, the B-24 did not have airliner-style restrooms. There were two relief tubes, one fore and one aft, often clogged with frozen urine, and there was no toilet. It was extremely difficult to go to the bathroom. Besides having so many layers to remove, there was no privacy at all.

One man on the "Multa Bona" could not wait until they landed, and someone in the back of the plane decided to help. In what could clearly be called an unofficial use of the intercom, he started announcing to everyone else what was going on. "He'd say, 'well, it looks like he's going to pull off his coat; sure enough he is. Here comes something else. He's unbuckling his suspenders. He's taking off his flying suit...'" The announcer continued to

give a play-by-play all through this, recalled flight engineer Ormond Buffington.

"So he went ahead, you know, and of course, they eventually quit talking about it. Well, after we got down out of altitude around 10,000 feet, I went back there and he had done this on a piece of paper, and tried to throw it out the camera hatch, and I tell you, it just smeared it all over the back of the airplane. When I got a look back there, he had his toilet tissue and he was just wiping it up back there. It ended up, that plane stunk for quite a while. But uh, we tend to remember things like that."

There were times when a mission had to be aborted. The planes would then fly back to the base where they would circle around in order to use up enough fuel to make the plane light enough to land.

The 500-pound general purpose bomb was the most commonly used ordnance, but there was a variety of ordnance used depending on the nature of the targets. Other typical bomb loads would consist of 100- 250- or 1000-bombs, 120-pound fragmentation clusters, or 100-pound incendiary clusters. If the bombs were not dropped on the target, they had to be unloaded once the aircraft returned to base. In order to do this, the ground personnel simply tripped the lever and dropped the bombs on the ground. Of course, this was after the bombs had been defused. This procedure was too dangerous for fragmentation

or incendiary clusters; they were simply dropped into the sea.

Some missions had to be flown by dead reckoning, in which there was too much cloud cover for a navigator to keep track of where the plane was. So, based on where they knew they had come from, and where they were going, the pilot would point the plane in a direction and hope the crew made it to, or at least near, their destination.

On his first mission as the navigator in the group lead plane, Lt. Carl Barr recorded six and a half hours of dead reckoning. "That's more work than I've done for a hell of a long time," Barr later recorded in his flight journal.

Not surprisingly, many men wanted their tours to end as quickly and as uneventfully as possible, but opinions varied as to what constituted a good final mission. There were some who were disappointed in easy missions with no opposition. It was especially disheartening to these men when their final missions had little or no excitement. The most disappointing thing of all was when they did not even drop the bombs but got the credit anyway. Most, however, hoped to have an easy mission as their last because they had seen too many friends get shot down on their own final missions.

Regardless of these differences of opinion, all agreed a good final mission included a safe landing at their home base. The last scheduled mission of the 455th Bomb Group was number 253, which was

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scheduled to take place 26 April 1945.

It never got off the ground. The air war over Europe ended the previous day.

On the 26th, the crews were in their planes awaiting takeoff, when they saw the red flare fired from the control tower. This signaled a cancellation. There were numerous cancellations of missions before, but the men knew this particular cancellation meant the end of the air war.

When asked if he would like to fly back to the United States or take a boat back, flight engineer Ormond Buffington of the 741st Squadron said, "just show me where the boat dock is."

The objective of strategic bombing had been to destroy Germany's ability to wage war. They had bombed oil refineries and storage facilities, air fields and aircraft manufacturing plants, ball bearing plants, transportation systems, marshalling yards, and communications centers.

One measure of success came in mid-March 1945, with the Fifteenth Air Force's final major strike against enemy oil "when 522 Liberators and 225 Fortresses buried the Florisdorf refinery near Vienna under more than sixteen hundred tons of bombs."

Almost all missions after that were against transportation systems, troop concentrations, and marshalling yards.

Enemy oil had been

defeated!

"In 18 months of operation, the Fifteenth had destroyed approximately half of all the fuel production capacity in Europe, a good part of the German fighter production capacity, and had crippled the enemy's transportation system over half of once-occupied Europe. It had dropped 303,842 tons of bombs on enemy targets in twelve countries, including major installations in eight capital cities.

In all, it had flown 148,955 heavy bomber sorties and 87,732 fighter sorties.

Albert Speer, head of Nazi production, wrote in his memoirs, *Inside the Third Reich*, "I could see the omens of the war's end almost every day in the blue southern sky when the bombers of the American Fifteenth Air Force crossed the Alps from their Italian bases to attack German industrial targets."

The victory was not without cost, however. The 455th Bomb Group alone lost 118 aircraft, and each aircraft carried ten men.

Once the war was over, the men of the 455th returned to life in the U.S. Some kept in touch with crew members for a few years, but many slowly lost touch as this portion of their past became nothing but a memory. For some, having any reminder of the war was too much, so they had no communication with anyone from the group.

It was not until 1987 that the 455th Bomb Group started having regular reunions. For

many at these reunions, it was as if they had never been apart.

With different experiences come different feelings about the way things were. Some people remember only the bad things they saw, while others prefer to remember the lighter, happier times they spent with their friends. Whatever the memories may be, the boys who went to war came back as men after doing their part to make the world a safer place. In the words of Ormond Buffington, "From time to time you think about certain things, but I'll tell you this: the good Lord brought me back."

Why do these graying warriors still travel from all parts of our country to meet together once again every one or two years? What was it about spending one or two years together that formed bonds that have lasted over six decades?

They fought common enemies together. They fought not only the Germans, although that was foremost in their minds. For many of them, they fought the uncertainties of being away from home for the first time and shared first-time experiences together. They also fought the little battles of daily living at a war camp in Italy. The enemies were everywhere. They fought Spam every day, two or three times a day. They fought the rain and the mud and the cold water of unheated showers.

They fought the sub-zero weather high over Germany along with both the tragic and the humorous aspects that it brought to their lives. They

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fought the uncertainty of knowing that every mission could be their last, and they fought the grief of losing friends.

They fought these battles together and they pulled each other through. It was surviving all of these struggles together that forged such lasting friendships.

These men, those still alive, are now in their eighties. As they look back over the years of their lives, many recognize their years in combat as the ones having the most lasting significance. They were involved in a deadly struggle that literally determined the course of history for their children and grandchildren.

Regardless of their feelings about the war, they acknowledge that it changed the world and set the stage for the way of life we now enjoy.

At regular intervals, they join together to pay tribute to one another and to those who are no longer with them.

Lisa Riggs



Can You Help?

I have always wanted to do an article on the donut girls that met the planes after each mission. In fact I interviewed Maggie, the donut girl for the 455th. When I went to the 50th anniversary of the Army Air Corp, one of the guys from the 455th told me that the donut girl for the 454th (across the field) was a very good looking girl.

The donut girl article is one of those projects that I will never get to, but my high school daughter decided to do a report on the donut girls so I can read the article when she is finished and perhaps if it is good enough, George will publish it in Bomber Legends.

Do you have any contact info for Maggie, the donut girl with the 455th and do you have any contact for the 454th BG?

I appreciate any help you can give.

Thanks,
Shawn Caldwell
scaldwell@visionbuildersgroup.com

Dear Editor,

The story below, "A Wonderful Thing", was sent to me by the daughter of my crew's 1st pilot, Harry Anderson, of the 740th Squadron.

Our plane, #492, was named "Linda Ann", after Harry's daughter. She was an infant when we were in Overseas Training in Tucson, Ariz. during late spring of 1944.

The enthusiasm she expresses is impressive after taking a flight 60 years later in the Collings Foundation B-24 at Prescott, Arizona.

Best regards,
Charlie Stark

A WONDERFUL THING

by Linda Ann

A few people were standing by the fence when I arrived. It was windy that day. I found a place to stand and we all waited looking hard to the east horizon. More and more

people arrived - old, middle age and families with young children. We all came to see history. I started hearing some words of conversation on the wind: "WWII; my husband, my father or my brother flew these planes." Then the murmur began. Small specs appeared just above the horizon. We all strained to see. Looking for all the world like pelicans in formation they came gliding in, just above the runway at Embury Riddle airfield in Prescott, Arizona. They were finally here! A beautiful landing by the historic B-17 followed by the majestic B-24. We were thrilled, one and all.

My husband Gary and I were in Prescott, Arizona for the weekend when I looked through the newspaper and saw the notice. "THEY'RE COMING HERE," I shouted to Gary. "The B-17 and the B-24 are coming here and I am staying here until I see them and get a ride!"

The Collings Foundation was sponsoring the visit and scheduling short rides around the area. I signed up! I called immediately and left a message. Reserve me a spot. "I HAVE TO GET ON THAT B-24".

That first trip was scheduled for the afternoon as soon as they arrived. But it was windy ... very windy, and it got stronger and stronger. Nervously, I waited an hour. Thirty more minutes, until the news was announced that it was too windy to take a chance flying these rare planes in such a strong wind. My ride was postponed.

Linda Ann (continued)

The following day was a scheduled maintenance day, so it would be yet another day before I got my ride, but we did get a chance to walk around the planes and go through them.

I had called one of your fellow Cerignola veterans that lived in nearby Prescott Valley, and we arranged to meet.

Robert Caldwell arrived, and I recognized him immediately by his blue B-24 jacket. He graciously walked me around the plane, explaining all the parts and nuances of that huge aircraft. We stayed a long time in a strong wind admiring "*The Dragon and His Tail.*"

People were going up little ladders and stools to go through the B-17 and B-24. I did not go through then since I was going on a flight...eventually.

Very early, I arrived for my flight. I paid my small fortune and got a ticket. I was going on the second trip. With fascination, I watched the engines start up and heard the stupendous roar fill the air. Thrilling!

How could such a huge plane with wings longer than the body ever lift off? But it did!

Shortly it returned from the flight around the area and set down in a gentle landing. It was then that the attendants yelled, "THIS WILL BE A HOT LANDING." Hot landing? What is that, I asked Bob, who had returned to see me get my ride even though he was not going. He smiled knowingly but was quiet. Then the second group

was motioned to go out to the plane and get on. But where were the ladders and the stools? I looked around nervously as people began struggling to get into that plane. There were NO LADDERS OR STOOLS. The engines were kept running and we had to board fighting that fierce backwash anyway we could. So this is a "hot landing"!

Well, Linda Ann (me) had grown quite a bit in the 60 years since her father's plane *THE LINDA ANN* was named for his three month little girl in 1944. I was just a little bundle then.

Now I was sixty years old and quite a hefty bundle trying to get into that plane! But get in I did, after several tries and with a boost from a strong helper. I went right up onto the flight deck, exactly where I wanted to go! How wonderful, I thought.

Not so fast, Linda Ann! See that seat belt on the floor behind the pilot? Get yourself down there and buckle yourself in I was told. Uh-oh!

So I struggled and strained and rolled myself over to the belt, sucked in my belly and finally heard that wonderful sound...Click!

Then the engines revvvveeed. The plane shooook. My heart thumppped.

The runway whizzed by under the open bomb bay doors. We were getting airborne! We gained altitude as the huge engines did their job. Thrilling!

It was then that I could undo the belt and stand up behind the pilots and see that wonderful Wild Blue Yonder that I have sung about for years from

the pilot's perspective.

The instrument array was impressive and the pilot was holding onto the throttle and turning us into a large circle around the area. I could see the red rocks of Sedona below.

Then I turned my attention to the inside of the plane. There were hardly any insides at all! I was in only a thin metal shell with inner steel framework. There was only a narrow catwalk through bomb racks over the bomb bay to the back of the plane where there were the open gun ports with the wind whipping in. Barely space for 10 men with some gunners even squeezed into tiny bubbles outside the plane!

This shocked me. How could this be? This plane is huge, yet the insides were cramped and dangerous to navigate. No amenities, to say the least. This huge target was flown day and night through enemy territory? This was no protection at all! My father, Harry Anderson, had been a B-24 pilot. He was but 20 years old, yet his crew called him Skipper, and Cap, but he rose to this responsibility as did they all in this terrible war. His crew had bounced me on their knees before leaving for Italy.

Linda Ann became the name of the B-24 my dad flew. My father's copilot was Charles Stark. And now I was flying in the same kind of aircraft. It was very enlightening.

Too quickly, our trip was ending, and I couldn't even fit across that tiny narrow catwalk through the bomb bay to the

Linda Ann (continued)

back of the plane. But the flight was long enough for me to understand much more than I did before.

I experienced what it was like to fly in this huge airplane. Now I knew how your life depended upon only this flimsy metal shell, huge engines and each other to get you home.

I knew what it meant in the movies when the crew panicked when an armed bomb hung up and did not drop to its target. In the movie there is a hero, hanging on for his life above the open bomb bay doors thousands of feet in the air to free that bomb. The movies were true. There were no good choices. Now I get it.

I am extremely thankful for this opportunity to get a flight in this last flying B-24. It was an enlightening thrill of a lifetime. I appreciate the Collings Foundation for providing this opportunity for people to fly in a piece of history. I see the planes will be in San Antonio in 2006.

I hope to go see them again, this time with my father, so he can tell me and his family his stories and show us through the B-24. I look forward to it.

Linda Ann

A Hero of Few Words

While interviewing an anonymous US Special Forces soldier, a news reporter asked the soldier what he felt when sniping members of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The soldier shrugged and replied, "Recoil."

John Devito finds airmen in his father-in-law's crew with help from the readers of the Cerignola Connection!

Editor's Note: The following is an update to a "Can You Help?" request printed in the Fall, 2005 edition of this newsletter.

Dear Editor,

After my request appeared in the last edition of this newsletter, I located an item written by a fellow named Joe English that had been on a crew with my father-in-law.

I phoned and had a really nice conversation with Mr. English's widow, who told me that she believed that everyone else on the crew had passed away except for Kenneth Sumwolt and two others (Anthony Pomales and my father-in-law, Richard Pelosi).

Mrs. English gave me Mr. Sumwolt's phone number, and I spoke to him and his wife. They are both very nice people. I spent quite some time talking to them.

My father-in-law sent Mr. Sumwolt a letter. We haven't heard back yet.

You printed the pictures of the crew I sent you in the Fall, 2005 Cerignola Connection, complete with the crew member names. I got a telephone call around Thanksgiving from a fellow named Jim Howarth. I recognized the name immediately.

He was the flyer who co-piloted the B-24 on which my father-in-law flew a number of missions. Most memorably, Mr.

Howarth was co-pilot of the B-24 my father-in-law came home from Italy on at the end of the war. It seemed that Mr. Howarth was expecting that my father-in-law would not still be around, and when I told him that he was living about ten minutes away from me here in New Jersey, Mr. Howarth exclaimed (if I remember right) something like "Holy Criminy, Dick's still alive!"

My father-in-law wasn't feeling too well during the Christmas season, but just this past January, Mr. Howarth phoned my father-in-law.

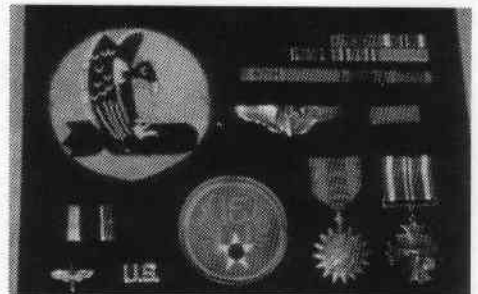
My father-in-law seemed so pleased to be making these connections after all these years.

Thanks, Editor.

Best Regards,

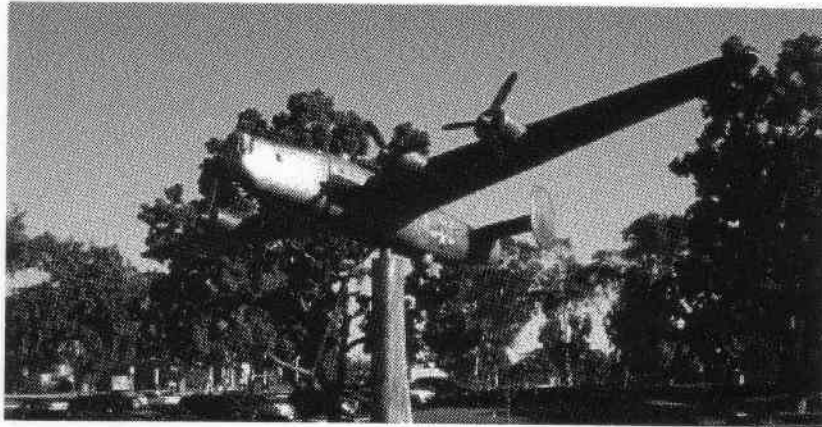
John Devito

jmdevito@verizon.net



Stirling Lantz's collage of the 455th BG in action, and a shadowbox of his military mementos arranged by his wife Barbara...

Courtesy of Gene Benson



From a dream to a reality...

The San Diego B-24 Memorial is now complete. Dedication of the bronze B-24 and surrounding Veteran's Memorial Gardens, occurred on Veteran's Day 11 November 2005.

More than 1,400 people attended the dedication, including at least 400 B-24 veterans. Many travelled from around the country to be part of this wonderful event.

The Memorial was completely financed by the hundreds of donations received over the last five years, mainly from B-24 veterans and their families.

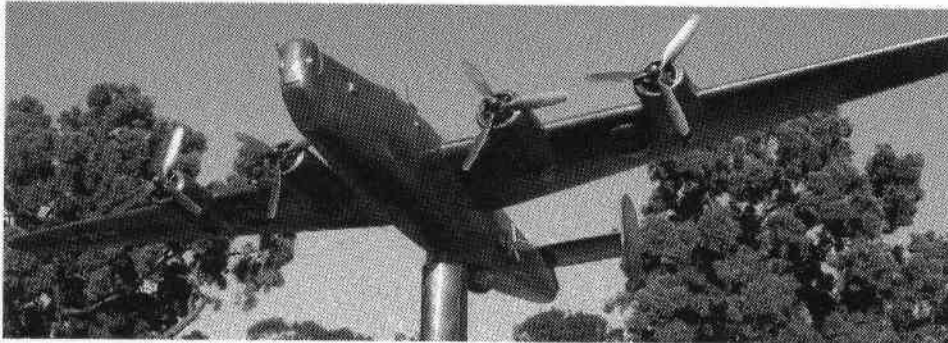
While in San Diego, make this a 'must visit' on your list of things to do. You'll be pleased. Don't forget to visit the adjacent Veteran's Memorial Center and Museum, caretaker for the B-24 Memorial.

They have a wonderful facility dedicated to all veterans and are currently featuring a special exhibit to the B-24 and her crews.

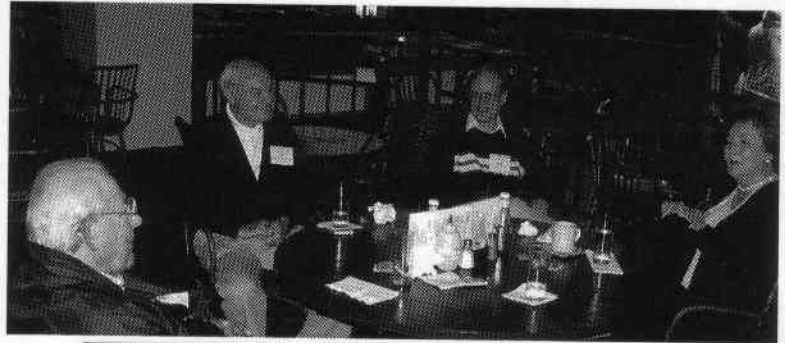
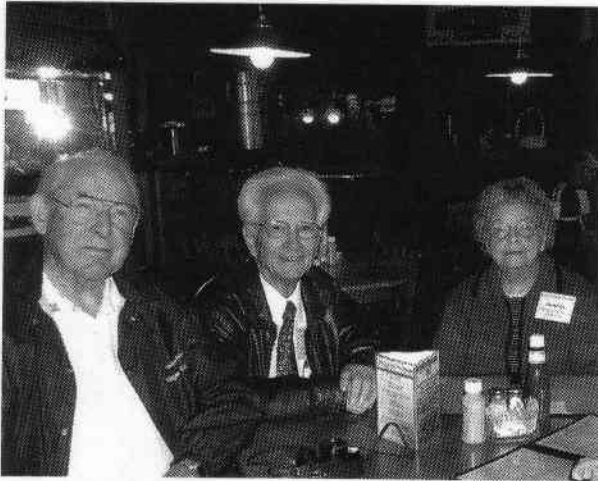
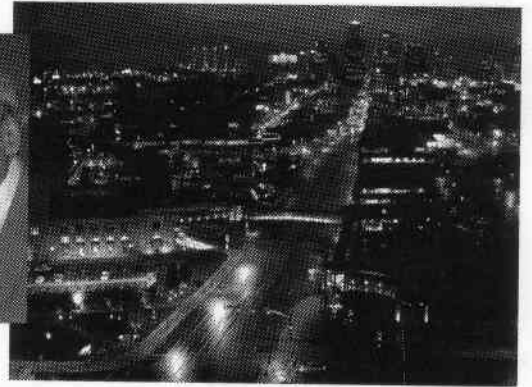
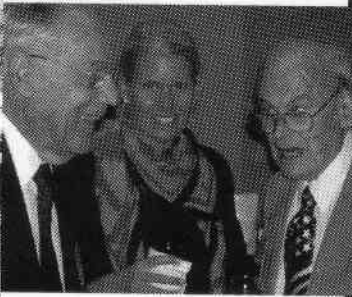
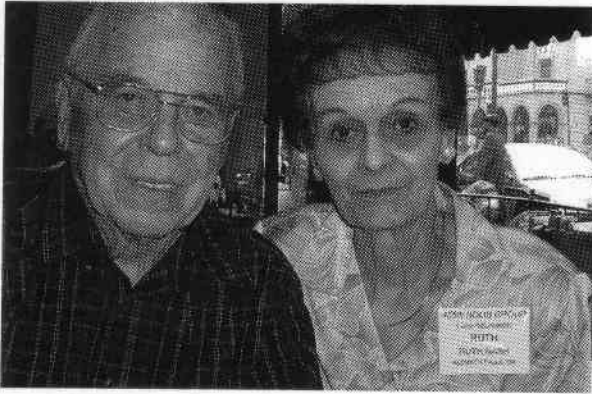
The B-24 Memorial and Veteran's Memorial Center and Museum are located at 2115 Park Blvd., in Balboa Park, San Diego. They can be reached at (619) 239-2300.

Photo Credit:

*David Reed Landscape
Architects via Bomber Legends
Magazine*



More Photos of Reunion, 2005 in Kansas City





Dear Editor,

I found this crew photo in a box I brought home from Italy. Our Pilot is Capt. Charles Jenkins (top row, third from left). I am next to him in the back row. Our navigator, 1st Lt. Harry Jordan, is in front of me in the second row.

The Sergeant gunners were Hendrickson (upper row, second from left), Joe Young (bottom, second from left), and Jesse Bono, our tail gunner (lower right corner). All in the picture survived 50 missions.

I had 49, including eight squadron leads and two group leads using a "Sperry" sight, which I much preferred to the "Norden".

Our favorite aircraft was the old reliable "Glamor Gal" pictured in Stirling's collage (see other photo).

Best Regards,

Gene Benson

115 High Ground Ave.

Livingston, Montana 59047

Dear Editor,

My father was a weather observer and as time goes on he is increasingly interested in talking about his experiences. Last year I have recorded a 90 minute conversation with him as we went through his war souvenirs and mementos.

Below is a photo of him standing in front of a B-24. I found the serial number (44-41105) and squadron (742) on another aviation website:

(<http://www.aviationarchaeology.com/src/AARmonthly/Apr1945O.htm>) and am trying to get a copy of the accident report regarding his aircraft.

Best Regards,

John Hallman

johnhallman@prodigy.net



Editor's Note:

The article below is from a 1944 newspaper story involving 1st Lt. Howard Shaffer's crew (741) during a training mission.

Lt. Shaffer took his Final Flight on October 28, 2005 (see page 4).

FLYERS EMERGE VERY THIRSTY FROM CANYON

Drank Muddy Water, Now Want Sodas Since Rescue

GRAND CANYON, Ariz., June 30. (U.P.)—Three army flyers emerged tonight from 10 days spent marooned in the uncharted depths of the Grand Canyon suffering only from one sprained ankle, a few sun-blisters and an unquenched thirst for chocolate sodas.

After polishing off a bottle of whisky, dropped to them from an army plane for medicinal purposes, the fliers, who subsisted for the first three days on wild berries and murky Colorado river water drunk out of a shoe, proceeded from the canyon rim to Kingman, Ariz., army air field.

Second Lt. Charles Goldbloom, Pittsburgh, Pa., told of landing on a three-foot ledge, on the edge of the Tonto plateau, where the fliers spent most of their isolation, after bailing out of their disabled B-24 bomber June 20.

"My parachute caught by a shroud line and I dangled there until morning, about seven hours, until I could see where I was. Then I saw I could have dropped another 1200 feet. I climbed up to the plateau and looked around."

Lt. Goldbloom then climbed down to the Colorado river bank where he found flight officer Maurice J. Cruickshank, Lawrence, Mass., lying in the grass. Cruickshank had sprained his ankle in the jump.

On the third day, Cpl. Roy W. Embanks, Kalispell, Mont., joined the trio at the river bank. Both Embanks and Cruickshank had landed in the canyon. The trio went swimming in the river, then realizing they could not get out of the canyon through the river, climbed to the plateau.

An army doctor who examined the three men reported that aside from the sprained ankle, they were in good condition, except for a severe sunburn.

Attention:
All 455th Bomb Group
Association Members

Remember that your membership dues pay for the costs of this newsletter, along with many misc. expenses related to the Association's activities. If you haven't paid your 2006 dues yet, please mail your check for \$15 to the 455th BG Assoc., Attention: Gregory Riggs, PO Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.

Note your mailing label on this newsletter. If there is a number 99 or lower on the top line, you're going to be dropped from the newsletter mailing list. This number indicated the last time you paid your annual dues, and we haven't heard from you since then. Thus, we are deleting those names from our newsletter mailing list.

To re-establish having your name on the mailing list, please send \$15 for 2006 dues to P.O. Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.



EDITOR'S REMINDER

I have received many excellent, written personal histories from members of the 455th BG Assoc. They include memories, photos, documents, and other memorabilia related to their time in the military. These fascinating stories are too lengthy to produce in their entirety in this newsletter. Editing them down would not do these stories justice.

I have created a website on which I have posted these stories and pictures in their entirety. Friends, families, researchers, and historians can access these personal histories & photos via this internet website.

To access the personal histories page, go to:

**[www.awardphp.com/
transcripts.php](http://www.awardphp.com/transcripts.php)**

Available now on the internet: ALL of the previous editions of the Cerignola Connection, going back to 1990!

To access the archived back-issues of the C.C., go to:

**[www.awardphp.com/
veterans.php](http://www.awardphp.com/veterans.php)**

Also, available now on the internet: The entire 455th BG History book is available online at the following web address:

**[www.awardphp.com/
455th_BG_History.php](http://www.awardphp.com/455th_BG_History.php)**

Disclaimer: The APHP website referred to in this section is related to a part-time, DFW-area personal history service business. No business solicitation is intended.

Your editor understands that several of you who have ordered the computer CD (with the 455th BG history book and back issues of the CC newsletter) have had trouble opening the files.

If you have received the CD and it cannot be opened on your computer, please let me know. I can email the files to you, or refund your money.

My apologies for the technical challenges.

The Willingness to Serve

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated by their nation."

George Washington

455th Bomb Group Assoc., Inc.
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

